

New molecule blocks cat allergy (Tue 29 Mar, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about cats/ allergies / designer drugs / mice / political animal testing / rashes / sneezing / hay fever / peanuts / ...Change topic / partner frequently to increase conversation.

ALLERGY BRAINSTORM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'allergy'. Share your words with a partner and talk about them.

ALLERGENS: How does being allergic to something change your life? Below is a list of common allergens. Discuss the kind of misery these allergens might cause and which would be the worst allergy:

pollen (hay fever)	penicillin
nuts	seafood
eggs	milk
soy products	house dust
animal hair	plastic

OTHER ALLERGIES: Read these people's comments about some "new" allergies.

- a. "I'm allergic to my boss. I get feelings of anger every time I look at him." - Lee, 32, Singapore.
- b. "I'm allergic to my wife. Every time I hear her voice I have a sudden urge to get my golf clubs and play golf." - Hank, 48, USA.
- c. "I have an allergy to telephone bills. Every time I pick up the envelope from the mail box I start shaking." - Mohammed, 25, Kenya.
- d. "I'm allergic to English. I become nervous, I sweat and start scratching my head when I can't think of the correct word." - Pip, 87, Thailand.
- e. "I suffer from a 'waking up early' allergy. I'm grouchy, I don't want to talk and I stare at the wall a lot." - Kumiko, 30, Japan.
- f. "My allergy is to cigarette smoke. I suddenly become very violent when I smell it in the street or in a non-smoking area." - Kylie, 19, Australia.
- g. "I think I'm allergic to love. There's someone in my gym who's amazingly gorgeous. Every time they look at me or say "hi", I go weak at the knees and my lips turn to jelly." - Saraya, 24, India.
- h. "I'm allergic to working. It makes me feel bad." - Paolo, 28, Brazil.

Talk about these new allergies with your partner. Do you suffer from any of them? To what degree? What advice would you give each sufferer? What other modern allergies can you think of (hamburgers, computers, spending money, traffic jams, George W. Bush...)?

PRE-READING IDEAS

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'chemical' and 'compound'.

TRUE FALSE: Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. Scientists have discovered a drug for cats who are allergic to humans. T / F
- b. A new half-cat, half-human chemical compound has been made. T / F
- c. The new compound means mice will no longer be afraid of cats. T / F
- d. The discovery may provide new ways of treating allergies. T / F
- e. Allergies happen when our bodies mistake allergens, such as pollen, for germs. T / F
- f. Symptoms of allergies include swelling, rashes, sneezing and itchy eyes. T / F
- g. Two per cent of people are allergic to cats. T / F
- h. Over-the-counter cat allergy medicines will be available later this year. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| (a) compound | mixture |
| (b) suffer | suggests |
| (c) fusion | respond |
| (d) indicates | laboratory |
| (e) platform | confuse |
| (f) mistake | suffering |
| (g) react | manifestations |
| (h) symptoms | composite |
| (i) clinical | base |
| (j) misery | experience |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (a) successfully | disease |
| (b) bring instant | systems |
| (c) human | ten per cent of people |
| (d) the same results could | relief |
| (e) therapy of allergic | the misery for hay fever sufferers |
| (f) our immune | trials |
| (g) our bodies react | cells |
| (h) An estimated | tested |
| (i) clinical | happen in humans |
| (j) It could end | by releasing the chemical histamine |

GAP FILL

New molecule blocks cat allergy

BNE: Scientists have successfully _____ a new chemical _____ that could bring instant relief to those who suffer from cat allergies. Researchers from the UCLA School of Medicine designed and tested a “chimeric human-cat fusion protein”, or, a laboratory-created chemical made by _____ proteins from cats and humans. The result blocked the cat allergy in mice and in human _____. The study, to be released in the April issue of *Nature* magazine, indicates the same results could happen in humans. The researchers say their discovery “may provide a new therapeutic platform for the immune-based therapy of _____ disease”.

mixing allergic tested cells compound

Allergies happen because our _____ systems mistake cat allergens, or other allergens such as pollen, for germs; our bodies _____ by releasing the chemical histamine, which causes rashes, swelling, sneezing, itchy eyes and other _____. An estimated ten per cent of people are allergic to cats. If the human-cat protein is successful in clinical trials on humans, cures for other allergies could quickly follow, bringing _____ to millions. It could end the _____ for hay fever sufferers and may prevent people who are allergic to peanuts from dying. However, prescription or over-the-counter medicines are still many years away.

relief symptoms misery immune react

DISCUSSION:

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. Were you surprised by anything in this article?
- c. Do you have any allergies?
- d. Do you know anyone who is allergic to something?
- e. Do you like cats?
- f. What new drug / medicine would you like scientists to create?
- g. Is it OK to test allergies on mice?
- h. Will scientists find a cure for all allergies?
- i. Do a lot of people in your country suffer from hay fever?
- j. What tree / plant causes hay fever in your country?
- k. Is it possible to be allergic to other people?
- l. What would life be like to be allergic to modern technology?
- m. Do you like to sneeze?
- n. How often do you take medicine?
- o. What provides you with instant relief from daily pressures?
- p. Did you like this discussion?
- q. Teacher / Student additional questions.

HOMework

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on hay fever. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. NEW ALLERGY:** Write a short news article on a newly discovered allergy (you'll probably have to make one up).
- 4. ALLERGY DIARY:** Write a one-day diary entry for an allergy sufferer. The allergy may be real or invented.

TEXT

New molecule blocks cat allergy

BNE: Scientists have successfully **tested** a new chemical **compound** that could bring instant relief to those who suffer from cat allergies. Researchers from the UCLA School of Medicine designed and tested a "chimeric human-cat fusion protein", or, a laboratory-created chemical made by **mixing** proteins from cats and humans. The result blocked the cat allergy in mice and in human **cells**. The study, to be released in the April issue of *Nature** magazine, indicates the same results could happen in humans. The researchers say their discovery "may provide a new therapeutic platform for the immune-based therapy of **allergic** disease".

Allergies happen because our **immune** systems mistake cat allergens, or other allergens such as pollen, for germs; our bodies **react** by releasing the chemical histamine, which causes rashes, swelling, sneezing, itchy eyes and other **symptoms**. An estimated ten per cent of people are allergic to cats. If the human-cat protein is successful in clinical trials on humans, cures for other allergies could quickly follow, bringing **relief** to millions. It could end the **misery** for hay fever sufferers and may prevent people who are allergic to peanuts from dying. However, prescription or over-the-counter medicines are still many years away.

*<http://www.nature.com/>